



The Atmos Clock oozes the same classiness found in 1930s lighters and watches, £45,000.

Dunhill Time



On a balmy night in Mayfair in early July, Dunhill unveiled its new timepiece collection to the world - or at least the watch world. Everyone from horologic royalty to the odd tabloid watch pundit was assembled and given the full treatment as Dunhill pulled out all the stops - and all the chairs - for this event. The stage was set and for Dunhill it was a biggie.

Tom Stubbs

Why was this event so important? Well, it has been a tough decade for Dunhill. Six years ago its menswear collection was dislocated, the suiting never quite consistent and the style agenda unclear. The wallets and pens were good and the company led the field in über-expensive chess sets, but it was in no way a stylistic *tour de force*. Then, what can best be described as 'the incident' ensued involving several million pounds worth of watch investment. But still, the clothes weren't right, the watches were plain wrong and the only useful thing you could rely on dunhill for was a good cigarette lighter and a set of luggage.

Fast-forward through several years of struggle and behind-the-scenes endeavor and you arrive at 2009 when Dunhill seems to have almost everything a luxury house could wish for. An illustrious HQ in The Duke of Westminster's old digs on Mayfair's Davies Street, AKA Bourdon House, boasts everything from its own barber to a private cinema and a state-of-the-art humidior. Next door houses Dunhill's extraordinarily exclusive gentleman's club - so exclusive, in fact, that I can't work out how to get into it. And, just arrived in store for autumn, is the first menswear collection from star British designer Kim Jones. Creative director Jones has twice shown on the runway in Paris and garnered all manner of plaudits. His menswear is looking every bit the international concern dunhill has been longing for. All they need now to crown this glory is a bevy of credible watches.



Left: The clean lines and familiar shape of the Facet are a throwback to its 1930s origins. Right: The Moonphase represents a whole lot of watch at an incredible price point.

Collaboration

All the timepieces bare the 'A Dunhill Ltd London' logo - a smart styling touch and nod to the patent that Alfred took out on his first timepieces in 1903. Underlining who Dunhill's horologic comrade is on this mission is the Atmos Clock. Their partner in time (and Richemont stable mate) is, of course, Jaeger-LeCoultre. The two giants last liaised back in the 1950s and 1960s when certain Dunhill watches employed the renowned Memovox movement. Powered only by fluctuations in temperature, the Atmos is a genius bit of haute horology. Inside the sealed capsule gaseous expansion yields 48 hours of power for a one degree celsius rise or fall in temperature. A stunning art deco design in black PVD metal with silver inlay, shagreen and glass combine deftly in a perfect blend of style and function. Flanked by geometric ornamentation, the clock mechanism displays hours and minutes on separate twin dials, while the Calibre 582 hovers magically at its epicentre. It is very special. Just like the Great Gatsby's Teasmade one imagines. Priced at £45,000 Dunhill has purchased eight. Jaeger has bought 20 to sell in its own stores, reflecting the pleasure and pride the company feels in the piece.

Speaking with the heart of a style man, I'm a huge fan of the Facet. The new version is beguiling and the fact that it was originally created back in 1936 re-emphasises the theory that there are no design newcomers in the world of watches. Through my work as a stylist, I've used my own Facet as a prop in classically themed

fashion shoots and have even dropped it down the track of a stately home's Stannah Stair lift. It exuded charm and survived in each circumstance respectively. The hand-wound Jaeger mechanism is quaint and visible through the glass back - all in all, a very tactile watch. The Facet glass was originally inspired by the interior lights of a 1930s Rolls Royce and, although beautiful, quality of execution was often problematic. But Dunhill and Jaeger have now overcome this problem and the Facet, in both pink gold and steel, could be the signature watch that builds credibility and custom if clever adaptation is applied over time.

By contrast embracing both modernity of design and complication of movement the Moonphase is a surprising watch. Moonphase, day, month and date are all housed in a PVD steel case on a rubberised strap. The date notation round the dial is unusual, but restrained markings keep the watch from looking too gadgety - the downfall of many watch forays in the hands of style brands. At 40 mm this styling suits the rhodium-plated hands and black guilloche dial. There's a lot of watch caper to take on board at £3,900 and I asked Carol Pierce, Dunhill's general manager of accessories, how this price point was possible. "The quality standard and getting the right price were key for us, as we are a luxury retailer and not a watch specialist." It's not aimed at watch collectors then? "Yes and also to Dunhill customers, who are collectors in their own right. We produce limited edition items such as the Namiki pens that are collectable and appeal to both customers and dedicated collectors."



Left: Simply elegant, the Classic will be the centre of Dunhill's advertising campaign.
Below: Dunhill's Discovery Room, home to the accessories that have made the brand.



Classic design

As a company, Dunhill fancies the Classic as its big hope and it will be the focus of any advertising activity as well as forming the backbone of the collection. It's low key, polite and looks like a couple of other 'modern meets vintage' themed pieces that have appeared since conspicuous consumption caught consumption and retired to the Bling Sanatorium. It is a good size and in the pink gold the diamond cut pattern guilloché certainly looks the part. I'm not 100 per cent convinced though. Will this be able to function as a second, third or fourth watch at £3,200 and £5,100 for steel and gold versions? One has to ask what it will be up against in those brackets. The Classic's aesthetic works and maybe that is enough, as it appears the brand has every faith in customer loyalty.

Kim Jones seems to prefer this model and, as I try them all out, I ask the fashion maestro if he finds the watch scene



A watch is something a man buys when he gets his first job. It is a status symbol he can talk to his mates about



Left: With the catwalk coming together, will the new watches prove to be the icing on the cake for Dunhill?

Far Left: Internationally acclaimed designer and Dunhill's creative director Kim Jones.

exciting. "Yes, I do like them," he says. "A watch is something a man buys when he gets his first job. They are a status symbol they can talk about with their mates. It's why it is important to our customers that we have a really good watchmaker working with us."

On the question of how much creative input Dunhill and Jones had on the pieces, he is clear: "I was involved with various bits and pieces and had quite a lot of input on the Atmos in particular. Although I personally favour clean lines and modernist design, I admire both the Classic in gold and the Moonphase. There are three timepieces in the Dunhill collection that do three very different things for different people. It's a tough time to sell watches so, at the end of the day, you have got to make sure you have something that people actually want."

So, could these watches be the missing element in what Dunhill has been working towards since Jones' arrival? "Dunhill is ever evolving," states Jones. "Alfred was 21 when he founded the company and he changed his product three times in his lifetime. Nothing is ever the final part. The watch range is subtle - none of the models scream out. For dunhill it is not about being flashy.

It is what is on the inside that counts and that is what we are all about." "Our motto is 'there's always something new at Dunhill'. Men like to shop in one place and we want to offer the best of its kind in every category," adds Pierce.

Such devout brand faith is touching. Might Jones venture which other lifestyle brands' watches he admires? "I quite like Hermes," he confides. "But I would never buy a watch from a fashion house. I would buy from a watchmaker, which is why it is so interesting to work with Jaeger-LeCoultre. I want to know a watch is going to last and know it is made by the right people."

Hermes is a poignant mention. Hermes always seems to get it right. The company has significant watches that are both plausible and commercially successful. Hermes has equestrian, Dunhill has motoring. Might this similarly pitched watch foray work for the Brit house on this occasion? Dunhill has certainly thought it through, attempting to combine customer profile and watch credibility in a stylish aesthetic package. And if Dunhill's beloved customer comes home to roost on this one all will be fine. If not it could be back to peddling lighters and chess sets. 🕒